



**COMPREHENSIVE  
SOLDIER FITNESS**  
STRONG MINDS ★ STRONG BODIES

Post-Deployment Resilience  
Training  
for Spouses/Couples

DAMO-CSF

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# Post-Deployment Resilience Training for Spouses/Couples

## Instructor Guide

Developed by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research  
v. 20 APR 11



# COMPREHENSIVE SOLDIER FITNESS

STRONG MINDS ★ STRONG BODIES

## Post-Deployment Resilience Training For Spouses/Couples



Version 20 April 2011

**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Post-Deployment Resilience Training for Spouses/Couples should be presented by a Master Resilience Trainer (MRT) or Resilience Training Assistant (RTA). Ideally, the training will be conducted by an Army Community Services (ACS) MRT/RTA in coordination with unit-level MRTs/RTAs. The training is designed to take 2 hours and may be provided in one 2-hour training block or can be divided into two 1-hour training blocks. There is a suggested break point if conducted in two 1-hour training sessions at the end of Slide 25 (Loving Friendship). Training can be conducted with Couples or with Spouses. The training notes are designed for both situations.

### Training Objectives:

1. Identify strengths you and your Family bring to facilitate reintegration.
2. Know what to expect in terms of the kinds of experiences you and your Spouse might have following a deployment.
3. Anticipate possible reactions.
4. Develop additional relationship skills and build upon existing skills to facilitate reintegration.

**Set Ground Rules:** This is interactive training; your participation can make the training more meaningful and may also help other training participants. Please turn off your cell phones.

### INSTRUCTOR NOTE:

1. When you conduct the training, avoid:
  - a) Personalizing - *"It wasn't like that when my Spouse came home..."*
  - b) Minimizing - *"It's not that bad!"*
  - c) Over dramatizing - *"It's the worst thing ever!"*
  - d) Gloom and doom - *"Here are the stats - 90% of you are going to have screwed up Families..."*
2. Some of the Couples may have a great deal of Army and life experience that they can draw from. Be careful to be respectful (and not to sound condescending) when addressing the group. Throughout, the focus is on Spouses but this material can be adapted to address significant others as well.

*This training was developed by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) in conjunction with the University of Pennsylvania. It also includes material from the Gottman Relationship Institute and John Gottman's books, "The Marriage Clinic" and "The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work".*

Record your own notes here:



It took resilience for you and your  
Family to get through the deployment

What can you expect now during  
reintegration?

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Key Points:

1. It took resilience to get through the deployment. Long separations associated with a deployment can be hard on Families and relationships. The fact you've gotten through it demonstrates that you are a resilient Family.
2. When Soldiers return home from a deployment, Couples often report there are ups and downs during the reintegration phase. Ask, "*What can you expect now during reintegration?*"

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: If this training occurs more than a few days after the Soldier has returned, a better question would be, "*What has the reintegration been like so far and how do you expect the reintegration to go in the next few months?*"

Encourage group discussion for this slide, encouraging the participation of Spouses and Couples who have gone through deployments before.

Potential answers might include: happiness now that the Soldier is home, nervousness about how the Soldier or Spouse may have changed during the deployment, a "honeymoon period" where everything is great, emotional ups and downs during the transition period, possibly arguing or fighting about who did more during the deployment, missing each other, etc.

Record your own notes here:



After returning home, Soldiers are usually happy to be back home but they may feel edgy and pissed off...



Key Points:

1. When returning home, Soldiers may have a wide range of feelings. At times they will be happy to be back with the Family, may be proud of their service, proud of what their Spouse was able to accomplish while they were gone, etc.
2. At other times the returning Soldiers may be on edge, withdrawn, easily irritated, angry etc. This inconsistency in feelings has been termed the "Combat Veteran's Paradox" (a paradox means two things that are inconsistent happening at the same time).
3. Ask, "*How about the Spouse, might there be some mixed feelings for the Spouse as well?*" (Transition to the next slide).

Record your own notes here:



After the Soldier returns home, Family members are usually happy to be reunited but they may be anxious too...



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### Key Points:

1. Family members will also have a wide range of feelings during the reunion ranging from happy and excited to anxious or frustrated. This inconsistency in feelings in Family members has been called the "Reunion Paradox".
2. Family members may also be proud of what they've accomplished at home and proud of the Soldier. Some Family members may be nervous about the reunion, losing their independence, being second-guessed, sharing roles again, how the Soldier or the Spouse may have changed during the deployment, etc.
3. Being both happy and concerned appears contradictory (that's why it's called a paradox) but it's normal.
4. Spouses are often most concerned about how the Soldier might have changed over the course of the deployment. These changes may require some time to adapt (transition) to the home environment although some of the changes may be positive.
5. How might some Soldiers be different following a deployment? (Transition to the next slide).

Record your own notes here:



- How might some Soldiers be different?
  - Appreciative
  - Startle easily, hyper-alert
  - Emotionally numb
  - Easily irritated
  - Driving habits
  - Alcohol use
  - Battle buddies
  - Sleep problems
  - Pride
- Which of these are combat skills?

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### Key Points:

1. Ask, “*What concerns might there be about how the Soldier has changed? How might the Soldier be different?*” [Write down examples on butcher block.]
2. SLIDE BUILDS (end with Pride) - mention things on the list that were not offered. Discuss by highlighting the points below.
3. Soldiers may feel more appreciative of what matters to them, they may feel proud of what they’ve accomplished, and they may also have developed close friends (battle buddies) who helped them get through the deployment successfully.
4. Soldiers may also have developed combat skills that helped them during the deployment but that may need to be adapted back home. Ask, “*Which of these changes may have helped the Soldier during the deployment?*”
5. SLIDE BUILDS - discuss things that were helpful in keeping the Soldier safe and mission effective during the deployment that might need to be adapted back home.
6. For example: being vigilant (startle easily, hyper-alert) helped keep the Soldier aware of changes to the environment and possible dangers. The Soldier may still be vigilant for a while after they get back home, and it may take some time to transition this skill to the home environment. Being emotionally numb may have helped keep the Soldier mission-focused but that same skill may also take a while to get adapted. Driving in a combat environment required a different set of techniques in order to help keep the Soldier safe (for example: straddling the center line, weaving, avoiding objects left on the road side). It may take a while for Soldiers to adapt their driving.
7. Some Families also report other changes such as the Soldier being easily irritated (having a low threshold for things that bother them) and alcohol use (sometimes to help reconnect with friends, to help calm down, feel numb, and get sleep). Many Soldiers also report having sleep disruptions for the first several months after they return home. Recognize that although being able to function on little sleep and sleeping lightly may have been a helpful skill during deployment, it takes a while to readjust sleeping habits. Just as Soldiers may be different, Family members may also be different. (Transition to next slide).

Record your own notes here:



- How might some Family members be different?
  - Appreciative
  - Independent
  - Tired
  - New friends
  - Ready for help with household
  - Children's reactions
  - Pride
- The changes may vary over the course of different deployments

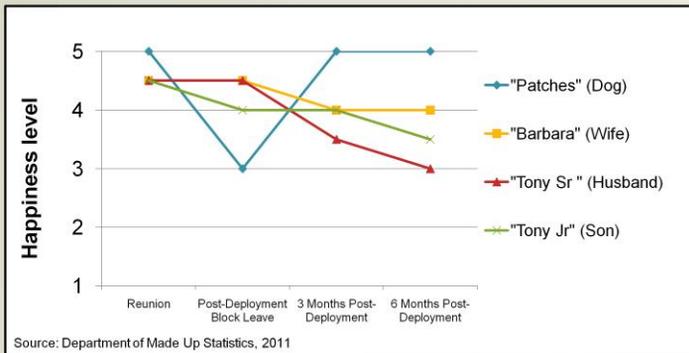
Key Points:

1. Ask, "*How might some Family members be different?*" [Write down examples on butcher block.].
2. SLIDE BUILDS (end with Pride) - mention things on the list that were not offered. Discuss by highlighting the points below.
3. Spouses may feel more appreciative of what matters to them and they may feel proud of what they've accomplished.
4. Ask, "*Which of these changes are skills that may have helped the Spouse during the deployment?*" Discuss that being independent (for example: being able to manage the household on their own) and developing new friends (for example: expanding their social support networks) may have been helpful in coping successfully during the deployment. The Spouse may have to adjust these skills during reintegration in order incorporate the Soldier back into the Family.
5. Some Families also report other changes such as being tired (for example: from all the responsibilities) and ready for help with the household. Many Families also report that their children need time to adjust to the returning Soldier. This adjustment may be different depending on the developmental age of the child (for example: younger children may be anxious or even afraid, teens may appear disinterested).
6. SLIDE BUILDS – ask, "*For those Spouses on their 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> deployment, are the transitions after deployment the same each time? Might the changes in both the Soldier and the Spouse be different after each deployment?*"

Record your own notes here:



- Remember ups and downs are normal
- Everyone has their own ups and downs



#### Key Points:

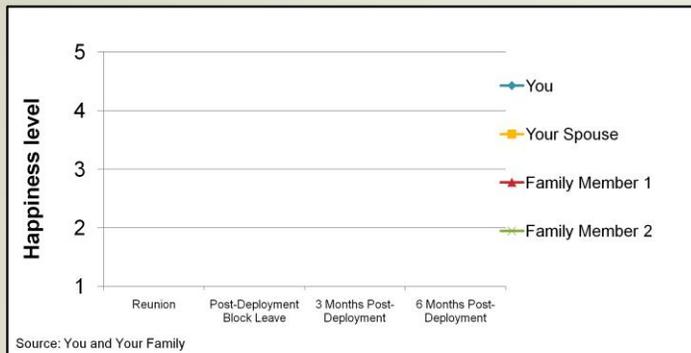
1. Take a look at the chart on this slide. This chart shows made-up data. This is just an example that demonstrates that there can be several ups and downs for each Family member. The timing of and reasons for the ups and downs may be different for each Family member (including the Family pet). Talking about these ups and downs and anticipating them together, can help you support one another.
2. Keep things in perspective and learn to go easy on yourself. Remember, if you're the Spouse at home, you may have done the job of both mom and dad, the plumber, lawn care specialist, head chef, etc. If you're the Soldier who deployed, you may have faced a challenging environment, encountered difficult combat-related demands, missed key Family events, missed being home, etc. Bottom line – don't judge yourself (or the dog!) too harshly.
3. Every military Family goes through the transition home after a deployment in their own way but each one of them will experience some ups and downs. It may take time to reconnect emotionally. Every Family member will have times that go well and times that go – not so well. Controlling your emotions means showing the right emotion at the right time, being careful not to over use strong emotions like anger (would you want to be around someone who is angry all of the time?) or not just shutting off your emotions.
4. Practice putting the ups and downs in perspective. Learn to ask yourself, "How could that have been better?" "How might it have been worse?" "How much of it can I control?"
5. Practice the skill "Hunt the Good Stuff" – "What is the "Good Stuff?" You might recognize it as "counting your blessings" or "appreciating what you have." Whatever you call it, it's finding the things, little or big, that matter to you on a daily basis. Things like a kind word or deed from someone you know, your Spouse making you breakfast in bed on a Saturday morning, or something one of your children says or does that creates a lasting memory for you.

\*"Hunt the Good Stuff" is a term used in the Army Master Resilience Trainer (MRT) Course, developed by the University of Pennsylvania.

Record your own notes here:



- How has reintegration been for you and your Family?



**Key Points:**

1. This is an activity to help you think about how the transition has gone for you or will go for you.
2. It can be helpful to anticipate positive times where things go well during the transition and it can also help to acknowledge that the transition may not feel smooth all the time. That way, when (or if) the Family experiences some bumps along the way, they can remember lots of Families go through this and it's expected.

**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Have Spouses or Couples pair up. Have them each complete the chart in their handouts. Ask them to take about 5 minutes to draw in lines to represent how they are doing in the transition and how they expect it to go during the next few months. Have them use different lines (for example a line with dots or a line with squares). They can add more lines to represent other Family members. There is no right or wrong answer.

**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Debrief the activity. Discuss the importance of accepting the ups and downs as normal (predictable) and being gentle with themselves as a Family. Acknowledge that Family members may not each have the same pattern – this difference can be useful (because Family members can help each other) or it may feel like they are not in sync with one another (this can feel stressful although expected). Introduce the idea of keeping an eye out for one another and paying attention to each other's transition experience.

3. If Spouses or other Family members (kids) experience significant and prolonged periods of difficulty (such as depression, anxiety, anger, or withdrawal for more than a month) there are many resources available to help them. Such resources include Army Community Services, Social Work Services, Chaplains/clergy, Military and Family Life Consultants, Military OneSource, and School Counselors.
4. The goal of this activity is to help Families develop accurate expectations about reintegration. We're now going to talk about expectations in more detail. (Transition to next slide).



- Expectations about reintegration
  - Readjusting roles
  - How quickly to let extended Family members and friends be part of the reunion
  - Physical intimacy
- You and your Spouse may have different images of how the reintegration will go...



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Key Points:

1. Ask, *“What are (or were) your expectations for the reintegration? How do you think readjusting roles will go?”* Discuss how they either readjusted or will readjust their roles including the Soldier in those roles.
2. Ask, *“How quickly do you plan to let others be part of the reunion?”* (for example: *having welcome home parties, visitors, meeting with relatives/friends*).
3. SLIDE BUILDS - show the first picture. Point out that she may have a honey-do list (a list of household tasks) for when he returns but that he may have another plan.
4. SLIDE BUILDS - show the second picture and point out that he may be hoping she's gained these particular skills while he was deployed. Discuss sharing the work around the house.
5. SLIDE BUILDS – ask, *“What are (or were) your expectations for intimacy?”* Practice humor. Show the third picture pointing out the dream reunion of sexual intimacy
6. SLIDE BUILDS - follow with the fourth picture of what the reality might be (the kids).

Record your own notes here:



- Think about the strengths you and your Family used during the deployment that helped you to be resilient
  - Which strengths were the most helpful?
- You can adapt these strengths to help you and your Family during reintegration



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### Key Points:

1. Ask, “*Which strengths helped you be resilient as an individual and as a Family during the deployment?*” [Write down examples on butcher paper]. Look for themes that connect to the next set of slides. These themes include adapting Family roles, creating and reinforcing connections (bonds), committing to the relationship, sharing experiences, etc.
2. Families can adapt their strengths to help them during reintegration. We are going to focus on four specific Family strengths. (Transition to next slide).

Record your own notes here:



Record your own notes here:

- Adapting Roles and Responsibilities
- Creating and Reinforcing Connections
- Committing to the Relationship
- Sharing Experiences



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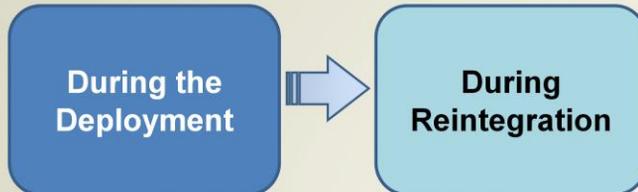
### Key Points:

1. There are several "Signature Family Strengths". These Family Strengths are things you did as a Couple that helped you during the deployment and can help you during reintegration. The key is adapting the strength now that the Soldier is home so that it can help you have a better reintegration.
2. The four Signature Strengths we want to talk about are
  - a. Adjusting Roles and Responsibilities
  - b. Creating and Reinforcing Connections
  - c. Committing to the Relationship
  - d. Sharing Experiences
3. In the next few slides we will ask you to discuss how you used the strength during the deployment and how you can adapt it now that you are in the reintegration phase.



Strength: Adapting Roles & Responsibilities

- During the deployment you and your Family were flexible in adopting new roles and responsibilities



- How can you adapt this strength?

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Record your own notes here:

Key Points:

1. During the deployment, the Soldier was not able to be part of the daily life of the Family; the Soldier's job was to maintain mission-focus. At home, the Spouse had to take on roles and responsibilities that might otherwise have been shared. These changes in roles and responsibilities were necessary.
2. Changing roles and responsibilities during the deployment required the entire Family to be flexible - an important Military Family skill.
3. Ask, "*How can you use the strength of adapting roles and responsibilities in the reintegration phase?*" Discussion should include negotiating which tasks should be handled by each Family member and the timeline for when role shifting occurs. Renegotiating roles and responsibilities is one way you can get back together as a team. This will take time and requires everyone to communicate, be patient and remain flexible. Speed is not critical -- the key is to make sure you both have similar expectations.
4. What happens if you don't continue to be flexible and adopt new roles again? What happens to the returning Soldier? What happens to the Spouse who was home? How included or supported does the Soldier feel? How understood does the Spouse feel? Some common challenges Soldiers and Families have identified in the past include:
  - a. Some Soldiers may return home and want to take back their old roles and responsibilities without discussing it first. This approach might work in some Families, but might not work in others.
  - b. Some Spouses may want the Soldier to immediately take over roles and responsibilities in order to give them a break. Some Soldiers may also want a break, preferring to ease back into the Family routine at their own pace which can create problems if both want a break from everything they experienced.
  - c. During the deployment children may have earned new privileges and have taken on new responsibilities. They may also be resistant to resuming pre-deployment roles. Ask, "*How should parents handle this?*" It's particularly important for parents to take the initiative in talking with kids about these changes and to be consistent with one another in what they say.
  - d. Ask experienced Spouses/Couples to share ideas on how to deal with these kinds of challenges.
5. Being able to adapt roles and responsibilities can be a sign of Family resilience.



- Find a partner to complete this activity
- Work through “Adapting Roles and Responsibilities” – see handout
- Take about 10 minutes for this activity

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Record your own notes here:

**Key Points:**

1. Set up this activity by reminding the participants that Couples had to change roles and responsibilities during the deployment and may be in the process of changing them again now that the Soldier is home.
2. Have the participants divide into two person teams; Couples should conduct this activity together. If there is an odd number of participants, one of the teams can have three people.
3. Have the teams work through the “Adapting Roles and Responsibilities” activity (see handout).
  - a. If the activity is being completed by Couples: the Couple has 10 minutes to go through the activity and list which Spouse did each task before, during and after the deployment. Participants should indicate if the person responsible was the husband, wife, or whether both partners were responsible. If participants want to add a task, they can use the spaces at the bottom of the list.
  - b. If the activity is being completed by participants who do not have their Spouse present: each participant should interview the other and complete the list – indicating if the husband, wife or both were responsible for each task before, during and after the deployment. If participants want to add a task, they can use the spaces at the bottom of the list.

**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Each participant should take 5 minutes to create their list. Tell the group to switch half-way through the activity. This activity should take 10 minutes in total.



Record your own notes here:

- If you did this activity without your Spouse:
  - How different would this activity be?
- What is the value of knowing which roles and responsibilities each Spouse will have?

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Key Points:

1. Ask "*For those of you who conducted the activity without your Spouse, how different would this exercise have been if you'd done the exercise with your Spouse.*" Discussion may address that doing this activity as a Couple may involve disagreements about who does what (whereas individual participants won't have to deal with such contradictions) and may provide an opportunity to negotiate roles.
2. Completing this activity without your Spouse may involve hearing other people's good examples of how roles change across the deployment-cycle and may normalize your own experience.

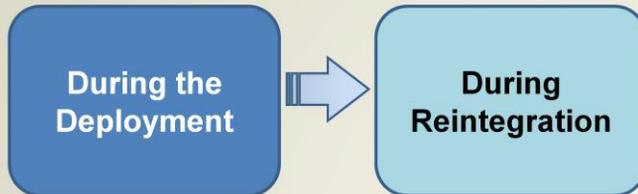
INSTRUCTOR NOTE: You do not need to ask the above question if all activity participants are couples.

3. Ask, "*What is the value of discussing/negotiating roles and responsibilities?*" Discussion may include how this activity can help clarify expectations regarding roles and responsibilities and therefore reduce arguments.



Strength: Creating & Reinforcing Connections

- During the deployment, you may have strengthened existing relationships and made new friends



- How can you adapt this strength?

Record your own notes here:

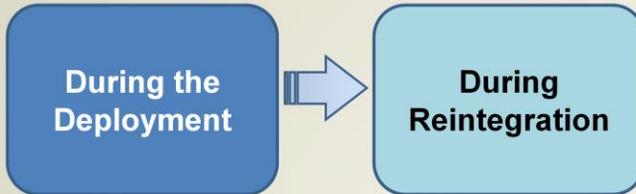
Key Points:

1. While deployed, Soldiers developed strong ties with their fellow Soldiers.
2. During the deployment Spouses may have also made new friends, and strengthened existing relationships with Family or friends. They may also have become more active within the Army community.
3. These connections were important for helping get through a challenge like being deployed or having your Spouse deployed, but now need to be adapted for the reunion of the Couple and Family.
4. Discuss the skill of creating bonds both for the deployed Soldier and the Spouse at home. Ask, *“How can you use the strength of creating and reinforcing connections?”* Discussion should include talking with the Soldier to negotiate how much time he/she should spend with his/her deployment buddies and how much time the Spouse should spend with his/her new friends/new activities.
5. Ask, *“What happens if you don’t get to know your Spouse’s new friends?”* Discussion may include the fact that the Spouse may feel left out or feel rejected, Spouses getting angry because of new friends, etc.
6. Having new friends should be viewed as a sign of strength, not a rejection of your Spouse.



Strength: Committing to the Relationship

- Before and during the deployment, you showed your commitment to each other



- How can you adapt this strength?

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Record your own notes here:

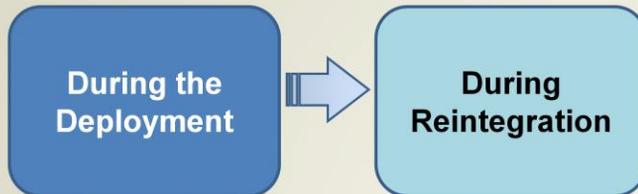
Key Points:

1. Discuss the skill of remaining committed to each other during the deployment. Ask, *“How did you express your commitment during the deployment? Some examples might be, “We emailed each other every day, We talked with each other on the phone at least weekly, I avoided going to places like the club to avoid potential problems, We said we loved each other and kept each other’s spirits up.”*
2. Discuss how both Spouses may have needed reassurance that they were each committed to the relationship during the deployment.
3. Ask, *“What are some ways you can demonstrate your commitment during reintegration?”* Potential answers include showing appreciation, making quality time for each other, being physically affectionate, surprising each other with gifts, etc.
4. You can show your appreciation for each other by using “I” statements that demonstrate what you appreciate about your Spouse; for example: *“I like the way you repainted the living room, It made me happy to receive letters/cards from you during the deployment, I appreciate that you made my favorite for dinner.”*
5. Another way to show appreciation is demonstrated by actions. For example: pitching in with chores around the house or yard that you wouldn’t normally do, taking care of the little things, etc.
6. Many things can keep Couples from spending time together (work, kids, commitments). Ask, *“How can you make sure you have quality time?”* For example: you can make time to do activities together that both of you enjoy (such as going for walks, having date night).
7. In terms of physical affection, it can be helpful to learn or even relearn what kind of physical touch makes your Spouse feel loved. Often physical touch can be more powerful than saying “I love you”. Sometimes people do things that they think shows love, but showing love is best when it’s about what works for your Spouse. Ask, *“What other ways can you show commitment?”* Discuss other ideas, such as surprising each other with small gifts, genuinely complimenting your Spouse in front of others, etc.
8. Couples can and will have problems at times. When this happens, seek help early - protect your investment in each other and your Family. Ask, *“What happens if you don’t demonstrate your commitment during reintegration?”* Discuss the potential misunderstandings, worries and jealousies that might occur and how that can create a negative emotional environment.
9. The fact that you’ve endured the year of deployment is a sign of resilient commitment.



Strength: Sharing Experiences

- During the deployment it may have been necessary to regulate the content of what you shared with each other



- How can you adapt this strength?

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Record your own notes here:

Key Points:

1. Soldiers often report they don't tell their Spouse everything that happens during the deployment. Spouses may also regulate the content of what was shared. Ask, "*What are some of the reasons Couples may not share everything during the deployment?*" Examples might be: some Soldiers may not want to tell their Spouse all the details to protect them from being worried, one partner may not be comfortable sharing or hearing information about the deployment, or one may have thought an event was not significant enough to discuss. Another reason might be to protect the other partner or some other Family member(s). Others may choose to keep the deployment separate from home life so it doesn't get "contaminated" with deployment-related memories. Finally, there may also be Operational Security (OPSEC) issues to consider. This approach to communication may have been a strength during the deployment. It may have helped each Spouse focus on what was important, it may have prevented each Spouse from worrying about things beyond his/her control, and may have also been a way of protecting each other.
2. Every Family member will have a deployment story to share. When pieced together, each individual's story becomes a part of the larger Family story and helps to keep us connected as a Family.
3. Soldiers and Families may need time to reflect on the deployment and how it impacted their lives. It may be important to understand that the Soldier may not be ready or comfortable sharing some of the deployment experiences. Determining how much of the story and when it will be shared is an individual decision. There's a balance between taking time to be comfortable with the story and the Family's need to hear at least some part of the story. Ask, "*What are some ways you can share experiences during reintegration?*" Another question can be directed to Spouses who have multiple deployment experiences "*How did your Family share their deployment stories?*" Each Family will come up with their own approach. Some possibilities include setting aside a time to talk about the deployment when the Couple has time alone, letting the topic come up in the context of everyday life, showing pictures or mementoes as a way of prompting the story, co-telling the story with a Battle Buddy or, for the Spouse, a friend or Family member.
4. Remember that Spouses and Family members may repeat some stories or add information to a story; you should avoid saying, "*You already told that story, we've heard it before.*" This may shut down the person who is recalling or giving new details to their story. Some Soldiers also report that telling their story to someone close to them is helpful in facilitating the adjustment home. Ask, "*What happens when you don't tell your Spouse your story? What might they think?*" Answers may include things like: You don't love them, you don't care. Another consequence is that the memory can get bottled up inside and get in the way of emotionally reconnecting.
5. Sharing experiences is a great way to rebuild intimacy and connection.



Record your own notes here:

- Adapting Roles and Responsibilities
- Creating and Reinforcing Connections
- Committing to the Relationship
- Sharing Experiences
  
- Which is your best strength as a Family?
  
- Reinforce your Family's resilience through the **Sound Marital House...**

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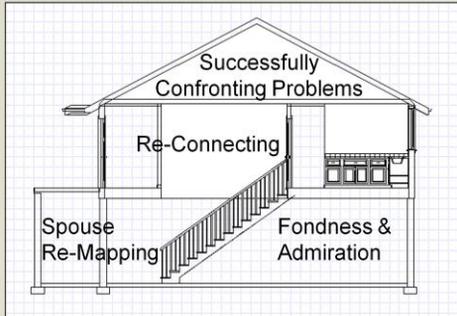
Key Points:

1. We just discussed how these signature strengths helped Couples during the deployment and how you can adjust and adapt them to help you through the reintegration. Ask "*Are we missing any strengths?*" Answers may include keeping perspective, spirituality, giving/sacrifice, etc.
2. SLIDE BUILDS - ask, "*Which is your best strength as a Family (either from this list or one of your own)?*"
3. SLIDE BUILDS - Now we want to talk about some new tools that you might be able to use during the reintegration or any time to make your relationship better. (Transition to next slide).



Record your own notes here:

- Re-Create a loving friendship
- Confront problems successfully
- Increase your positivity ratio



#### Key Points:

1. There are several key structural elements to the "Sound Marital House" after a deployment – re-creating a loving friendship that enables your relationship to thrive, learning to confront problems successfully so those problems do not destroy the quality of the relationship and increasing "your positivity ratio" (we'll talk more about all of these in a moment).
2. Reinforcing a "Sound Marital House" is important because research has shown that Couples who have a loving friendship and know how to successfully confront problems tend to have strong marriages that last for years. The "Sound Marital House" helps Couples withstand the difficult experiences that all Couples have from time to time.
3. Increasing "Your Positivity Ratio" is about doing more of the good things you do for your Spouse. We'll cover the details on that later.
4. We've already talked about how Families go through a transition period during post-deployment, and we're now going to focus on the importance of re-connecting as a Couple and as a Family in order to re-create a loving friendship. Notice that the re-connecting part of the "Sound Marital House" is a staircase – it's the key to connecting parts of the house together.

**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Dr. John Gottman of the University of Washington coined the term "Sound Marital House," and he developed the accompanying principles based on his extensive research with Couples. His work focuses on identifying variables that can be used to account for which Couples stay together and which do not. The variables he studies are based on Sound Marital House behaviors and concepts. Some of Gottman's terms and concepts used in this training have been revised to blend with the terms and concepts in the MRT Course.



- Enhances the quality of your relationship
- Shortens and smoothes out the disagreements
- Reduces the stress in your relationship
- It's like money in the bank



NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

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Key Points:

1. "Re-connecting" after a deployment means reuniting as a Couple and re-establishing the Couple as a team. There are several ways to re-connect as a Couple; you probably have your own favorites, and some ways may appeal to you more than others.
2. One of the most important ways is by doing loving things for your Spouse, saying loving things to your Spouse and listening to your Spouse. By re-connecting on a daily basis, you start re-building your emotional bank account with each other.
3. Even happy, successful Couples will experience some conflict. Depositing daily goodwill in your "Couple's bank account" can act as a buffer when you have a disagreement. The end result is that the Couple experiences shorter periods of being at odds with one another and less intense arguments. This, in turn, helps make the relationship more fun and stable.
4. In order to make sure you are doing things for your Spouse that he/she appreciates, you have to know about your Spouse's preferences. After a deployment, there may be a period of time where you need to re-learn each other's preferences - we call this Re-Mapping. (Transition to next slide).

Record your own notes here:



- Get reacquainted with each other with post-deployment Spouse Re-Mapping
  - Get to know what matters to your Spouse (old and new)
  - Get to know your Spouse's new social network (friends/buddies)
  - Get to know how your Spouse's preferences may have changed
- Re-build fondness and admiration
- Rekindle the romance

22

Key Points:

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: The phrase "Spouse Re-Mapping" is used here but Gottman calls them "Love maps". The concepts are the same.

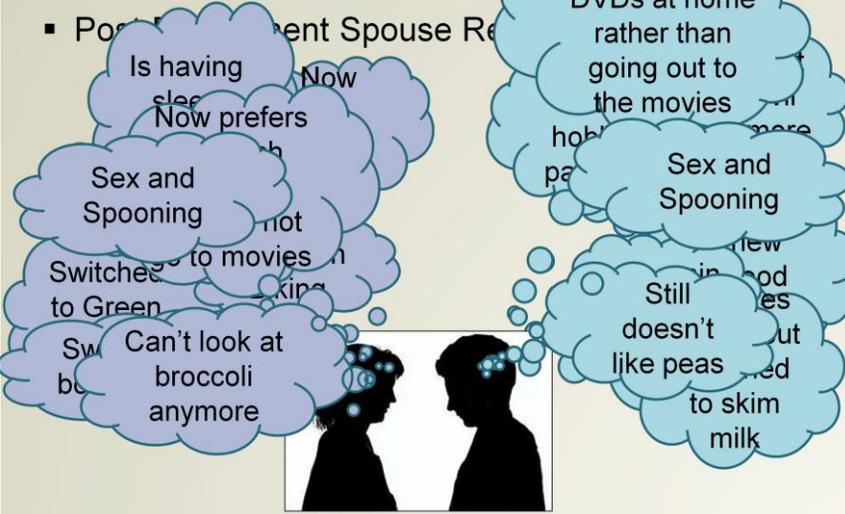
1. Spouse Re-Mapping is knowing what your Spouse likes, what your Spouse doesn't like and what matters to your Spouse. It's devoting part of your brain to thinking about how to make your Spouse happy. You can know what makes your Spouse happy if you know your Spouse's preferences. As we mentioned earlier, both the Soldier and the Spouse may have changed following the deployment. In order to get to know each other again, you may need to re-map your Spouse's preferences. This includes things like getting to know what matters to your Spouse both before the deployment (old) and after (new).
2. Part of Spouse Re-Mapping is knowing who is important to your Spouse. For example: when Soldiers return home they may want to continue to have close relationships with their Battle Buddies. Spouses who were back home may also want to continue supportive friendships they formed with members of the community during the deployment. Re-mapping is being aware of these important relationships.
3. These new friends can continue to be a source of strength and support for both of you as your transition your primary focus back to one another. Focusing on each other is part of re-starting your "we-ness." "We-ness" is seeing and thinking about yourselves as a Couple with common goals and dreams, shared responsibilities and commitment to each other and your Family.
4. Another way to re-create a loving friendship is through rebuilding fondness and admiration. Fondness and admiration entail remembering your Spouse's contributions to the relationship.
5. Ask, "*What are some the ways to rekindle the romance?*" Some possible answers may include: Doing some of the things you did when you first met each other, going out on dates (if possible), holding hands, doing things for each other, sending love notes or text messages, etc. Washing the dishes can also score big points.

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: "Spouse Re-Mapping" is a topic that's further covered in Pre-Deployment Resilient Training for Spouses/Couples.


**COMPREHENSIVE SOLDIER FITNESS**  
 STRONG MINDS ★ STRONG BODIES

Lovin' Friendship

■ Post-Deployment Spouse Re-Mapping



Is having trouble sleeping  
 Now prefers sex and spooning  
 Switched to Green  
 Can't look at broccoli anymore

Now prefers DVDs at home rather than going out to the movies  
 Sex and Spooning  
 Still doesn't like peas  
 to skim milk

Sex and Spooning

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman 23

Record your own notes here:

**Key Points:**

1. Ask, "How much do you know about your Spouse? If I asked you, could you tell me who your Spouse's friends are? Do you know what your Spouse's dreams and goals are? What they like or don't like? What their worries or concerns are?"

**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** The above questions are to get the group oriented toward the goals of Spouse Re-Mapping, not to answer these specific questions).

2. "Spouse Mapping" is thinking about your Spouse. It's about paying attention to the details of your Spouse's life, being familiar with his/her world. Notice there is a wife and a husband in the picture. How much are they aware of what the other one likes and dislikes? Of how much they've changed over the deployment?
3. SLIDE BUILDS (continue to left-click the mouse until all examples are revealed) - notice how the Spouse Re-Mapping thoughts alternate between what the wife is thinking about the husband and what the husband is thinking about the wife. Point out which preferences have changed, which have remained the same, and what they still have in common.
4. Couples who have good "Spouse Maps" know each other, know what their Spouse likes or dislikes, what their concerns are, what their dreams and aspirations are, etc. They keep updating their Spouse Maps with new information about their Spouse. This updating will be challenging after a deployment, and requires time.
5. Ask, "What is the benefit of Spouse Re-Mapping for a Couple?" Some possible responses might include: "It helps build resilience to weather marital storms." "Couples are better prepared to cope with deployments, or other stressful events in their lives." "It promotes and improves the love between a Couple."



- Move to break-out rooms
- Divide into teams of 2
- Work through Spouse Re-Mapping – see handout
- Take about 10 minutes for this activity

24

**Key Points:**

1. As we've discussed, a Spouse map is knowing what your Spouse likes and dislikes – essentially, you mentally map their preferences.

**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Explain that according to Gottman, laying the foundation for a strong relationship starts with knowing your Spouse and what your Spouse likes and doesn't like in as much detail as possible.

2. Have the participants divide into two person teams; Couples should conduct this activity together. If there is an odd number of participants, one of the teams can have three people.
3. Have the teams work through the "Spouse Re-Mapping" activity (see handout).
4. Each person has five minutes to interview their team member and find out as much as possible about their likes and dislikes and if these likes and dislikes have changed since before the deployment. "Like" and "Dislike" examples may include: favorite color, food, place to eat, sports to play, sports to watch, thing to wear, place to vacation, chores, cars, clothing, etc.
5. The teams should identify "likes" and "dislikes" that have changed since the deployment.

**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Each participant should take 5 minutes to create their list. Tell the group to switch half-way through the activity. This activity should take 10 minutes in total.



- If you did this exercise without your Spouse:
  - How different would this activity be with your Spouse?
- What is the value of knowing these kinds of details about your Spouse?
- How does it feel to know that your Spouse has changed?

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Key Points:

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: Discuss how this activity is similar or different to Spouse Re-Mapping with your Spouse or significant other. Acknowledge that there is an artificial quality to having to track specific preferences, to having a time limit, or mapping someone who you don't really know. Discuss the similarities. This activity required curiosity and interest, you have to care and listen to the other person, asking follow-up questions if necessary.

1. Ask, "*What is the value of knowing all of the "nitty gritty" about your partner?*" Discuss that this kind of knowledge can help you anticipate what to do for one another, and what to avoid.
2. Ask, "*How can "re-drawing" your map become a post-deployment strength and skill? What is the value of taking the time to re-establish what's important to your Spouse?*" Discuss some possible answers such as: "*I can be of more help with the things he/she might struggle with as a result of the deployment.*" "*I can gain an appreciation of what she/he did while I was away.*" "*I might realize that her/his deployment was complicated just like mine.*"
3. Ask, "*How does it feel to know that your Spouse has changed?*" Discuss that changes can be exciting but that they can also feel disconcerting and even disorienting. Change happens even without a deployment, but the cumulative changes from a year apart can be a particular challenge. Are there certain core elements that are the same? You can re-build your map around these core components of what matters to your Spouse.
4. How can "re-drawing" your map become a post-deployment strength and skill? What is the value of taking the time to re-establishing things of importance to your spouse? Some possible answers might be: "*I can be of more help with the things he/she might struggle with as a result of the deployment.*" "*I can gain an appreciation of what she/he did while I was away. I might realize that her/his "mission" was just as complicated and difficult to carry on.*"
5. Re-mapping your Spouse can help you move into the next part of re-building a loving friendship: expressing Fondness and Admiration. (Transition to next slide).



- Fondness and Admiration

- Reinforce by remembering your Spouse's contributions to the relationship
- Focus on thoughts about your Spouse
  - What initially attracted you
  - What currently attracts you

- How do you use fondness and admiration to reinforce loving friendship?



NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

26

Key Points:

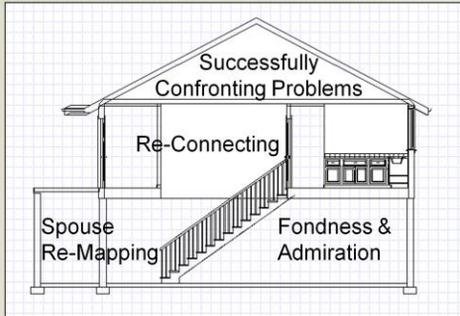
1. "Fondness and Admiration" is about honoring and respecting your Spouse's contributions to the relationship. It's about remembering what he/she contributes to the Family relationship, careers, success, and happiness. Fondness and Admiration is the emotional or feeling part of building a loving friendship.
2. Fondness and Admiration help us to recall the things that attracted us to our partner – to remember the things that we admired about him/her that lead to committing your life to him/her. Fondness and Admiration comes from honoring and respecting your Spouse's past and present contributions to the relationship and is reinforced each time you think about it.
3. As with Spouse Re-Mapping, Fondness and Admiration needs to be updated and refreshed by new experiences. Adding the new experiences to your old Fondness and Admiration memories can enrich the marital relationship.
4. Talk about your history together – this can help you re-create a sense of "we-ness" as a Couple. Couple's that can recall the fond memories they have for one another are more likely to stay together. Talking "a walk down memory lane" can help you recognize the Admiration and Fondness you have for each other.
5. Fondness and Admiration helps re-build a loving friendship, the cornerstone of the "Sound Marital House" (Transition to next slide).

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: If the training module is to be presented in two, 2-hour blocks, this is a good time to break. This may also be a good time for participants to visit the rest room.



Record your own notes here:

- Re-create a loving friendship
- Confront problems successfully
- Increase your positivity ratio



NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

27

Key Points:

1. The first part of the “Sound Marital House” was acknowledging the need to re-connect.
2. Next we talked about how to re-create a loving friendship in terms of “Spouse Re-Mapping” and “Fondness and Admiration”.
3. Now we are going to focus on re-learning how to confront problems successfully.

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: Transition to the next slide by saying, “*When combined with creating a loving friendship, re-learning how to successfully confront relationship problems can help strengthen relationships.*”



- You can use Repair Attempts and Gentle Starts to make relationships more resilient when problems arise



28

**Key Points:**

1. Everyone and every Couple has problems or conflicts from time to time and there are many ways to approach resolving problems or conflicts.
2. You can use “Repair Attempts” and “Gentle Starts” to make relationships more resilient when problems arise. Let’s examine both of these approaches. (Transition to the next slide).

Record your own notes here:



Record your own notes here:

- Sometimes communications hit a speed bump
- Make and accept “*Repair Attempts*”
  - An attempt to defuse the tension
  - Examples: *Agreeing to disagree, gentle banter, sticking out tongue, funny statements like “drop and give me twenty,” making a face*
- Accept your partner’s influence
- Directly confronting problems...

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

29

### Key Points:

1. There are times when even our best intentions get off track. As you know, even happy, successful Couples have disagreements and argue. What separates successful Couples from those in trouble is how they confront the disagreement and how they manage their “Repair Attempts”. This concept also comes from the Gottman.
2. A “Repair Attempt” is the way a Couple tries to put the “brakes on” during an argument. It’s an attempt by one or both Spouses, to defuse the event, calm the situation down and re-connect with one another. When conflict arises, Repair Attempts prevent negativity from getting out of control.
3. Repair Attempt methods vary with each Couple; where what may be successful for one Couple, may not work for another. The situation can also influence what works; what may work for one argument, may not work for another.
4. Some examples of Repair Attempts are: agreeing to disagree, sticking out your tongue, making a face, saying funny things like “*Drop and give me twenty*”, engaging in gentle banter, accepting your partner’s influence, etc.
5. If the Repair Attempt is successful, the Couple can move on and the disagreement is either minimized or resolved. Ask, “*Does anyone have another example of a Repair Attempt that they would like to share with the group?*” Discuss.
6. Resolving conflict also means being willing to accept the influence of the other person. Accepting influence is both an attitude and a skill that involves compromise.
7. Ask, “*Is “Repair Attempt” the best word for this process?*” Discuss that the word “repair” implies that something is broken that needs fixing, but relationships aren’t necessarily broken just because of a conflict. “Defusing” might be a better word for some Couples. Discuss that each Couple may want to chose their own word.
8. One key to Repair Attempts is that they are something that you practice. So that when you need them, you’re ready to use them – they feel familiar, comfortable and part of your “we-ness” as a Couple. We’re going to practice Repair Attempts now. (Transition to next slide).



Record your own notes here:

- Move to break-out rooms
- Divide into groups of 2 or 3
- Work through Repair Attempts – see handout
- Take about 10 minutes for this activity

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

30

Key Points:

1. Remind the participants that Repair Attempts are things Couples say and do to prevent negativity in an argument from getting out of control.
2. Explain that this activity involves identifying and developing Repair Attempts.
3. Again, divide into teams of two. Have the teams work through the “Repair Attempts: activity (see handout).
4. Each person has five minutes to interview their team member and find what Repair Attempts they and their Spouse use. For example: do they stick out their tongue, make a funny face/goofy smile, a quick embrace, saying, “*Let’s take a break*”, “*Can you rephrase that?*”, “*Wait, I need a minute to calm down*”, “*Ok, ‘Exalted One’ you’re right and I’m wrong, as usual*”, “*Airborne, come to at ease in the harness*”, etc.
5. List which Repair Attempts each person and their Spouse use. Rate how much stress each person feels before, during and after the Repair Attempt? (from 0 being “no stress” to 5 being very stressed). What are other typical feelings before, during and after?
5. Instruct the teams to complete the handout.

**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Each participant should take 5 minutes to create their list. Tell the group to switch half-way through the activity. This activity should take 10 minutes in total.



- Debrief
- After a mistake, you can try to make it right:

**Couples  
Coaching**  
(click here)

31

Key Points

1. Debrief the Repair Attempt activity.
2. Ask, “Does anyone have Repair Attempts they’d like to share with the group?”
  - a. “How do you normally interact when using a Repair Attempt?”
  - b. “Is it difficult to detach enough from the argument to try a Repair Attempt?”
  - c. “How do you feel afterwards? Is it immediately rewarding?”
3. Discuss the benefits of getting good at Repair Attempts. That some people are better at them than others. It may not always be fair, but that both members of the Couple should practice, and can even make a game out of being the first to engage in a Repair Attempt.
4. Some people may feel like they need a coach to talk with their Spouse during stressful conversations. This video clip is about a guy who has a coach telling him what to do. See what you think.

**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Left-click on the box “Couples Coaching” to run the video clip of communication between husband and wife.

Record your own notes here:



▪ Debrief

- What strengths does this Couple have?
- What Repair Attempts did you notice?

32

Record your own notes here:

Key Points

1. Ask, "*What strengths did the Couple have together? What strength did they each have?*" Discuss possible strengths such as love and affection, desire to make someone else happy, he was mapping her work concern, she was willing to keep trying, etc.
2. Ask, "*What did you think of his first attempt to listen to her – when she says she doesn't feel like talking and he walks away?*" Discuss that in the first attempt, the wife contributes to the miscommunication attempt by saying "no". Ask, "*Why might she have done this?*" Because he had done such a bad job last time. Her initial response of "no" is also a kind of stonewalling (one-word answers). He also didn't have her well mapped in terms of what matters to her (work, and how she gets along with others at work).
3. Ask, "*What did you think of his second attempt to listen to her – when he tries to fix the problem by drawing out a solution?*" Discuss whether his wife wanted him to fix the problem, whether this kind of "fix-it" behavior is pretty typical and whether she made it clear what she wanted from him.
4. Discuss how the husband engaged in what might qualify as a type of Repair Attempt. (He said "*on second thought, I think I'll just listen*" and she responded, "*thank you*"). Discuss whether this was a good approach and the importance of the wife's response (including her simple acceptance of the Repair Attempt).
5. Discuss the final conversation attempt when he listened to her describe her perception of the work problem. Ask, "*Was this better? What was her response? What could the husband have done to do an even better job in the final conversation?*" He could have asked follow-on questions and reflected how she felt emotionally rather than just listen and say he'd listen any time she wanted.
6. Ask, "*In what way did they use timing communication right ?*" it was a quiet time when they were alone, at the end of the day. Ask, "*Should he have waited until after she was done with the dishes?*" Note also they did a good job of tolerating each other's weaknesses (she let him keep trying, he tried to understand her even if she wasn't being direct), and soothing each other (they hugged at the end), etc.
7. Note that they also used a respectful tone of voice throughout – how we say things matter. (Transition to next slide).



## How we say it is as important as what we say



NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

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### Key Points

1. How Couples say things to one another is important in terms of building a Sound Marital House. That includes tone of voice and non-verbal behaviors. Ask the participants to take a look at the pictures on the slide, then ask, “*What do you think is happening with the two Couples and what leads you to believe what you see is happening?*”
2. Some responses might be: “*The Couple on the left is having a fight, they are not happy with each other. He’s looking away and not talking. Her body language says she is angry and closed to further conversation.*” “*The couple on the right is happy, maybe he just asked her to marry him. They are both smiling and touching each other in a positive and affectionate way.*”
3. Part of any interaction is the emotional tone – the tone of voice we choose to deliver our words and the non-verbal message our body language sends. It’s everything we say and do to deliver our message.
4. Emotional tone relates to the affective or emotional quality of a conversation. It enables the receiver to understand how the sender is feeling about the conversation (such as angry, happy, sad, excited, etc.).
5. Examples of positive emotional tone include: smiling, open body posture, good eye contact, active listening, a calm voice or positive touching. Examples of negative emotional tone include: closed body posture (like in the picture on the left), poor eye contact (like in the picture on the left), interrupting the other person, mocking the other person, being sarcastic, and mimicking the other person.



### ▪ Gentle Start:

- Time your communication
- Limit your concern to a specific complaint
- Don't store complaints and unload them all at once
- Use "I" Statements: "*I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when you \_\_\_\_\_; I would prefer if you would \_\_\_\_\_.*"
- Choose the right emotional tone

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

34

### Key Points:

1. How you say things is important when you have to confront problems with your Spouse; so is how you introduce the problem you want to talk about. You might want to try what Gottman refers to as the "Gentle Start" for addressing a conflict. A "Gentle Start" is a strategy for reducing the tension in an argument by starting off in a way that sets you up for success. Gentle starts lower the intensity and makes it easier for a Couple to find a resolution to the problem or come to an understanding or compromise they can each live with. Next time you have a disagreement try these simple suggestions.
2. Pick the right time to have your discussion. Don't insist on having "the conversation" when your partner is pressed for time and cannot focus. Don't force the conversation for the sake of clearing the decks. It may be that your Spouse needs time to cool down or rethink his/her position. Words spoken in anger and haste are difficult to take back.
3. Limit your concern to a specific complaint; *complain, don't blame*. Describe what you think is happening without judging or evaluating.
4. Storing up your arguments or complaints and then unloading them all at once can overwhelm your partner and make it more difficult to resolve the problem. Don't keep rehashing the same argument over and over. Some problems may not be solvable. The goal for the unsolvable problem or argument is to find a happy medium you can both live with.
5. Use "I" statements wherever possible. Be clear and speak clearly about what you need. Be polite and give ample amounts of appreciation. "I" statements make your comments personal and focused. They convey what you (the speaker) feels, needs or thinks about a specific event or circumstance. Try using the following sentence structure, "*I feel (insert a feeling) when you (insert a description of a specific behavior). I would prefer it if you (insert a specific request for a reasonable change).*" For example, in the video clip the wife could have said: "*I feel misunderstood when you try to solve my problems at work. I would prefer if you would just listen and be supportive without offering solutions.*"
6. When you do have an argument or disagreement, choose an emotional tone that will lead to a successful resolution. Engage in the conversation as though you were speaking with someone you love. Sometimes it can be difficult to keep perspective that we are speaking with someone we love and have built a life with. We tend to use Harsh Starts or other negative ways of relating. (Transition to next slide).

Record your own notes here:



- Harsh Start:
  - Begin with a negative or accusatory tone
  - Jump immediately to criticism and/or contempt
  - Use the Four Horsemen

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

35

### Key Points:

1. Ask, “*What is a “Harsh Start?”*” Discuss possible answers – emphasize that a “Harsh Start” is when one or both individuals begin a disagreement or conflict with a accusatory or negative emotional tone that includes criticism, sarcasm or contempt. For example: “*You’re never around when I need you. You’re not a very good father.*”
2. How an argument begins often predicts how it will end. If it starts off on a negative tone it generally ends on a negative tone.
3. Ask, “*Why do you think it is so difficult to keep a “Harsh Start” from ending on a negative note?*” Some possible answers might include: “*It may be difficult for one or both parties to stop and change their emotional tone in the middle of a heated argument.*” “*They be more likely to dig in or press on with the attack in an effort to win the argument.*” “*The harsh starts builds more resentment and anger.*”
4. “Harsh Starts” typically involve beginning with a negative tone and jumping to criticism or contempt (contempt is a kind of disrespect). Couples who engage in Harsh Starts also typically move to what Gottman calls “the Four Horsemen” – these are four behaviors that are particularly destructive for relationships. (Transition to next slide).

Record your own notes here:



- The Four Horsemen:
  - Criticism
  - Contempt
  - Defensiveness
  - Stonewalling



NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

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### Key Points:

1. The “Four Horsemen” are:
  - a. Criticism
  - b. Contempt
  - c. Defensiveness
  - d. Stonewalling
2. Gottman found that when Couples frequently interact using the Four Horsemen, they may be headed for serious conflict, and may even be more likely to separate or divorce.

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: Transition to next slide by saying, “*We will go into more detail about each of the Four Horsemen and how to counter them in the coming slides.*”

Record your own notes here:



- Definition: A global complaint that typically includes a personality or character attack
- Event: Soldier doesn't take out the trash as he had promised
  - Criticism: *"You're a terrible husband, you don't care about this Family!"*
  - Kind Request: *"I know you have a lot going on. I would appreciate it if you took out the trash."*

### Key Points:

1. In terms of the Four Horsemen, Criticism is regarded as a global complaint that typically includes a personality or character attack. It's normal to have some complaints about your Spouse; the key thing is how you express those complaints. There is a difference between expressing a specific complaint about something your Spouse did and criticizing them.
2. The difference between complaining and criticizing is that a complaint addresses a "specific" action or problem while a criticism tends to be more "global" in nature and suggests there is something flawed about your partner.
3. Let's work through an example of Criticism: The Soldier promised to take out the trash but didn't. The Spouse responds with, *"You're a terrible husband, you don't care about this Family."* Ask, *"What makes this Criticism?"* Discuss that this is a global statement that includes a character attack.
4. SLIDE BUILDS - the way to counter criticism is to make a Kind (and specific ) Request. Make it kind by acknowledging what the other person has already contributed (or acknowledges other factors, etc.). The second part of the kind request is to be very specific.
5. Ask, *"How could you change this criticism so it isn't a global character attack?"* Discuss possible options; note when an option is an example of a specific request and one which is kind/empathic. So, in this example a Kind Request might be, *"I know you have a lot going on. I would appreciate it if you took out the trash."*
6. Note that criticizing is common in relationships and doesn't necessarily mean the Couple is headed for a separation or divorce. However, if Couples get into a pattern of always criticizing each other, this may lead to the other three Horsemen which can be even more toxic to the relationship.



- Definition: Mocking attitude or sarcasm that typically includes moral disgust
- Event: Spouse makes a mistake in the check book
  - Contempt: *“Hey genius, you screwed up the check book again! How come you can’t get it right, you’ve had a year to learn this while I was deployed?”*
  - Respectful Request: *“Honey, you did a good job of taking care of the finances while I was deployed, but I noticed the check book is a little off. Can we sit down and figure this out?”*

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

38

### Key Points:

1. The next of the Four Horsemen is Contempt. Contempt is making a “biting” statement or doing something that mocks your Spouse or makes it seem like you think you are better than your Spouse. Some examples are things like insults and name calling.
2. Here’s an example of Contempt. The Spouse makes a mistake in the check book. The Soldier says *“Hey genius, you screwed up the check book again! How come you can’t get it right, you’ve had a year to learn this while I was deployed.”*
3. **SLIDE BUILDS** - the way to counter contempt is to make a Respectful Request. Ask, *“How could you change this contempt statement to a Respectful Request?”* One possible response might be, *“Honey, you did a good job of taking care of the finances while I was deployed but I noticed the check book is a little off. Can we sit down and figure this out?”*
4. Ask: *“What makes this request respectful?”* Discuss emphasizing appreciation, keeping the request specific and acknowledging contributing factors (such as finance making an error in the Soldier’s pay).

Record your own notes here:



- Definition: Warding off a perceived attack rather than listening to the concern
- Event: Spouse says *"You're angry all the time since you got back. You're picking fights with everyone."*
  - Defensiveness: *"Leave me alone. If you'd give me some space I wouldn't have to yell at you all the time."*
  - Acknowledging Need for Improvement: *"Sorry, I guess I have been angry a lot lately. They told us this may happen for a while. If it doesn't improve, I'll go talk to somebody."*

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

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#### Key Points:

1. The third of the Four Horsemen is Defensiveness. Defensiveness may occur when someone sees themselves as the victim. They attempt to ward off a perceived attack rather than listen to the concern of their Spouse. They may make excuses or justify their behavior by saying things like, *"It's not my fault..."*. Additionally they may counterattack by meeting their Spouse's criticism with a criticism of their own. For example: they may make statements such as, *"That's not true, you're the one who ..."*
2. Defensiveness rarely has the desired effect. The attacking Spouse usually does not back down or apologize and it generally ends up escalating the conflict or the Spouse may shut down and not discuss what's really bothering them (and this shutting down can undermine the relationship – we'll get to this behavior pattern in the next slide).
3. Let's walk through an example of how Defensiveness may end up happening. A Spouse says to the Soldier, *"You're angry all the time since you got back. You're picking fights with everyone."* The Soldier replies defensively with, *"Leave me alone. If you'd give me some space I wouldn't have to yell at you all the time."*
4. SLIDE BUILDS - one way a person can counter being defensive is to acknowledge the need for improvement. Ask, *"How could you change this defensive response to Acknowledging the Need for Improvement (and also the grain of truth in the Spouse's statement)?"* One possible response that incorporates "acknowledging the need for Improvement" might be: *"Sorry, I guess I have been angry a lot lately. They told us this may happen for a while. If it doesn't improve, I'll go talk to somebody."*
5. Ask, *"How difficult is it to acknowledge a grain of truth and not be defensive?"* Discuss that many people find it difficult to not be defensive but by remembering your loving friendship, you can keep your perspective and remember why it's worth avoiding these kinds of destructive patterns.

Record your own notes here:



- Definition: Withdrawing from an argument rather than listening or talking about a problem
- Event: Soldier gets another speeding ticket and Spouse wants to talk about it
  - Stonewalling: Soldier *turns up the TV and looks away from Spouse, ignoring the request.*
  - Attending to Unpleasant Topics: *“I guess I miss the adrenaline but you’re right, I have been getting too many speeding tickets. I need to slow down.”*

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

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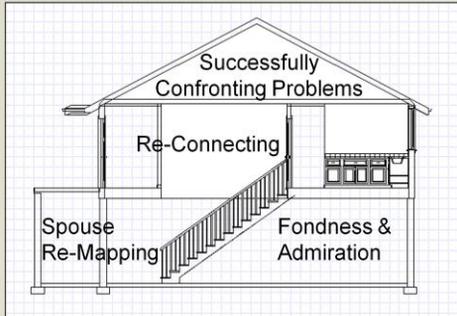
### Key Points:

1. The final “Horseman” is called Stonewalling. Stonewalling is the intentional withdrawing or walking away from an argument or interaction. This is different than making the good choice to take some time out to cool off if you or your partner are angry during an argument. Stonewalling can take the form of “clamming up”, not paying attention, sticking your head in the news paper, “giving the silent treatment”, saying “*tell it to the hand...*”, etc.
2. Stonewalling is often preceded by what Gottman calls “flooding” – this is the body’s physical response to feeling overwhelmed by an argument. Men tend to feel overwhelmed or “flooded” during arguments more often than women. Flooding causes a person to become physically uncomfortable during an argument. In response, the person Stonewalls.
3. Here’s an example of how Stonewalling may occur. The Soldier gets another speeding ticket and the Spouse wants to talk about it. The Soldier turns up the TV and looks away from the Spouse, ignoring the request. Ask “*How might this type of interaction end up?*” Discuss how the Spouse may end up reacting to this kind of behavior. Responses may include things like - the Spouse being angry, having hurt feelings, etc.
4. SLIDE BUILDS - the way to counter the impulse to Stonewall is by Attending to the Unpleasant Topic of the request. Ask, “*How could you alter this Stonewalling example and Attend to Unpleasant Topics?*” One possible response is, “*I guess I miss the adrenaline (of combat driving) but you’re right, I have been getting too many speeding tickets. I need to slow down.*” Ask, “*How would the Spouse react then?*” Discuss how the Couple may benefit and reconnect and strengthen their Sound Marital House.



Record your own notes here:

- Re-Create a loving friendship
- Confront problems successfully
- Increase your positivity ratio



NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

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### Key Points:

1. Let's quickly review. We started building the Sound Marital House by re-creating a loving friendship.
2. Ask, "*Who can tell me the elements that make up the loving friendship?*" [The correct answer: Re-Connecting, Spouse Re-Mapping and Fondness and Admiration.]

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: You may give a clue that the answers to the question are there on the slide.

3. We then moved from re-creating a loving friendship to some suggestions on confronting problems successfully using Repair Attempts, Gentle Starts and countering the Four Horsemen.

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: Transition to the next slide by saying "*Let's put the finishing touches on the Sound Marital House by talking about the Positivity Ratio.*"



- Your “Positivity Ratio” is the way you:
  - Think about your Spouse
  - Feel about your Spouse
  - Connect with your Spouse
- Unhappy Couples -  $0.8:1$
- Happy Couples -  $5:1$



NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

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### Key Points:

1. Your “Positivity Ratio” is the proportion of the positive things you do for your Spouse on a daily basis compared to the negative things you do. It’s not only what your actions are, but also how you think and feel about your Spouse as well as how you connect with your Spouse.
2. Gottman reports unhappy Couples tend to have a positivity ratio of 0.8 (less than 1) positive thought, feeling or connection to every 1 negative thought, feeling and connection (and those Couples also use Harsh Starts and the Four Horsemen more).
3. In contrast, Couples that have at least 5 positive thoughts, feelings and connections to every 1 negative thought, feeling or connection have happy, successful marriages that typically last a lifetime.
4. Some ways to do increase the Positivity Ratio are to take time to think about your Spouse in terms of what he/she likes, dislikes, dreams about, worries about, etc.
5. You can do large or small things to increase your Positivity Ratio. Also, the things you do to increase your Positivity Ratio should reflect what makes your Spouse happy, even if they might be things you wouldn’t normally do for yourself.

**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Transition to the next slide by saying, “*What does this ratio look like in action?*”

Record your own notes here:


**COMPREHENSIVE SOLDIER FITNESS**  
 STRONG MINDS. STRONG BODIES

**Positivity Ratio:  
 Unhappy Couples**

Scraped most of the ice off the Spouse's car.  
 Kissed before leaving for work.

Complained my Spouse forgot to take the trash out.  
 Refilled my coffee but didn't offer me a second cup.  
 Watched TV instead of listening to Spouse.



0.8:1 43

Record your own notes here:

Key Points:

1. SLIDE BUILDS (continue to left-click the mouse until all examples are revealed) - here's an example of what an unhappy Couple looks like in terms of the Positivity Ratio.
2. Ask, "What do you notice about this slide?" Point out that even unhappy Couples engage in positive thoughts, feelings and actions. It's not about the absence of such positive experiences but about the proportion.
3. Discuss that it's natural to focus on the negative. This is called the "negativity bias" and is why even one negative remark or action can weigh more heavily than one positive remark or action.

COMPREHENSIVE SOLDIER FITNESS  
STRONG MINDS

Positivity Ratio:  
Happy Couples

Appreciated how much we've gone through together

Complained my Spouse forgot to take out the garbage

Kissed before leaving for deployment

Said "I love you" to Spouse



5:1

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Record your own notes here:

Key Points:

1. SLIDE BUILDS (continue to left-click the mouse until all examples are revealed) - here's an example of what a happy Couple looks like in terms of the Positivity Ratio.
2. Ask, "What do you notice about this slide?" Point out that happy Couples engage in more positive thoughts, feelings and actions. It's not about the absence of negative experiences – happy Couples occasionally criticize one another or have negative thoughts about each other. Again it's a matter of proportion.
3. Notice the focus here is on Your Positivity Ratio because that's what you can control – not on tracking your partner's ratio.
4. Ask, "What role might Spouse Re-Mapping have in keeping a healthy Positivity Ratio?" Discuss how knowing someone's likes and dislikes makes it easier to engage in positive actions that build your Positivity Ratio.
5. Ask, "When might it be difficult to maintain a healthy Positivity Ratio?" Discuss how it might be more difficult to maintain a healthy Positivity Ratio during the deployment. Ask, "What things did you do during the deployment to make sure you kept a healthy Positivity Ratio?" Discuss things like sending care packages, snail mail, e-mail, phone calls, etc.



Record your own notes here:

- How might your “Positivity Ratio” be different after a deployment?
  - Competing for who had it worse...
- Re-establishing a Couple’s Positivity Ratio
  - Thinking, feeling, and connecting as a Couple
  - Being kind to “the Couple”



NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

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### Key Points:

1. Ask, “*How might your Positivity Ratio be different after a deployment?*” Discuss how some Couples may compete for who had it worse. They may compare the sacrifices they made and the difficulties they faced during the deployment and this can drive the Positivity Ratio down. On the other hand, some Couples may appreciate each other more after the deployment.
2. Ask, “*What positive things are you doing now that you are together again?*” Possible answers may be making each other’s favorite meals, giving back rubs, etc.
3. Up to now, we have talked about what positive things you can do for each other as individuals. These are powerful thoughts, feelings and actions that can help re-connect your relationship. However, notice on the picture above there are two people on each side of the see-saw; that’s for a reason. If you think about yourselves as a Couple, what do you do to have “Couple-oriented” thoughts, feelings and connections to increase your Couple’s Positivity Ratio?
4. For example: going out to celebrate important Couple events like an anniversary (of their first date, the marriage proposal, etc.). Instead of getting each other individual gifts you could get a present for yourselves as a Couple (like a new high-tech coffee maker), going out for a walk together, and reserving intimate time together.

**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** You don’t have to focus on the negative things that Couples may do jointly, but if it comes up, here are two examples: both of them do badly as a Couple by both ignoring an important anniversary date or both arguing in front of other people.



## Active Constructive Responding

- Respond to each other with authentic, active and constructive interest
- Leaves Family members feeling validated and understood
- Builds strong Family relationships
- Praise leads to positive outcomes

NOTE: Adapted from Shelly Gable

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### Key Points

1. "Active Constructive Responding" is showing authentic, active and constructive interest when someone tells you good news. Active Constructive Responding is designed to improve relationships and increase a sense of belonging.
2. By using Active Constructive Responding, Family members feel validated and understood. It's a skill that can be taught to all Family members.
3. Giving praise is an opportunity to shape behavior, enhance motivation and build optimism and resilience. Effective praise identifies *what was working* and creates effectiveness and a pattern for future successes.
4. Now let's talk about the way to do Active Constructive Responding. (Transition to the next slide).



	Constructive	Destructive
Active	<i>Showing authentic interest and asking meaningful questions enhances the conversation; Family member feels validated and understood</i>	<i>Squashing the event, brings conversation to a halt; Family member feels ashamed, embarrassed, guilty, or angry</i>
Passive	<i>Quiet, understated support; conversation fizzles out; Family member feels unimportant, misunderstood, embarrassed, or guilty</i>	<i>Ignoring the event; conversation never starts; Family member feels confused, guilty or disappointed</i>

NOTE: Adapted from Shelly Gable; Copyright © 2010 by The Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved.

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**Key points:**

1. As you can see by this model, there are four types of responses an individual can use when someone shares a positive experience.
2. The four response categories are:
  - a) **Passive Constructive Responding:** The person offers quiet and understated support; conversation tends to fizzle out. The Family member may feel unimportant, misunderstood, embarrassed, or even guilty. The person is not actively engaged in the conversation and does little to build on the conversation or explore the situation.
  - b) **Passive Destructive Responding:** The person ignores the event; conversation never starts. The Family member may feel confused, guilty or disappointed. The person ignores the event by sidetracking the conversation or switching topics completely.
  - c) **Active Destructive Responding:** The person squashes the event; conversation comes to a halt. The Family member may feel ashamed, embarrassed, guilty, or angry. The person actively points out the negative implications of the situation and highlights the down sides of the event.
  - d) **Active Constructive Responding:** The person shows authentic interest and asks meaningful questions; conversation is enhanced. The Family member may feel validated and understood. The person offers praise, asks questions and helps the Family member to elaborate on the positive experience by eliciting more information and asking questions that draw out details of the situation and its meaning.

Record your own notes here:



- Your Spouse tells you about a great deal she saw on a vacation package for block leave...

	Constructive	Destructive
Active	<i>"That's fantastic honey, I've always wanted to go there. How did you ever get such a great deal?"</i>	<i>"Why did you waste your time. I'd rather go fishing with my buddies. Next time ask before you make plans"</i>
Passive	<i>" That's nice."</i>	<i>"I need to get more milk for tomorrow."</i>

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**Key Points:**

1. Look at the Active Constructive Responding example on this slide.
2. SLIDE BUILDS (continue to left-click the mouse until all examples are revealed) - for example:

**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** The slide builds in a counter-clockwise direction starting with Passive Constructive Responding. Ask for other pertinent responses the correspond with each box.

- a. Passive Constructive Responding: *"That's nice."*
  - b. Passive Destructive Responding: *"I need to get more milk for tomorrow."*
  - c. Active Destructive Responding: *"Why did you waste your time. I'd rather go fishing with my buddies. Next time ask before you make plans."*
  - d. Active Constructive Responding: *"That's fantastic honey, I've always wanted to go there. How did you ever find such a great deal?"*
3. Active Constructive Responding takes practice but many people see the benefits of using it in their relationship right away.

Record your own notes here:



## Which is your relationship strength?

- Compromise (de-escalate arguments)
- Time communication right
- Tolerate each other's weaknesses
- Be a calming influence for each other
- Hunt the good stuff
- Do the little things
- Other...?

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### Key Points:

1. We've talked about the Sound Marital House and skills to focus on in reinforcing your Sound Marital House. There's lots of other relationship skills that are also important. Here's a list of some of them. Take a look and think about which are your particular strengths as individuals and as a Couple.
2. Compromise – involves being able to meet your Spouse half-way and being able to de-escalate arguments by negotiating instead of being stubborn and sticking to your individual preference.
3. Timing communication right – is picking the optimal time to have a discussion about important, sensitive topics. These topics may include things you would like your Spouse to change. Timing may also involve knowing when you need to take a break in a conversation that's getting too heated. When you take a break and walk away, explaining why you need a break (that you need to cool off) keeps the behavior distinct from Stonewalling.
4. Tolerating each other's weakness – this first involves acknowledging that everyone has an area or areas where they struggle. This area is different for each person and for each couple. Sometimes Couples get stuck in what Gottman refers to as "*if onlies*". These "*if onlies*" are things we wish were different about the other person (for example: "if only" the other person were sexier, more understanding, or a better listener, then life would be fine). This line of thinking is not helpful to building connections but undermines respect and admiration. If Spouses are able to accept each other's flaws, they can concentrate on thinking about what they appreciate about one another.
5. Being a calming influence for each other – involves knowing what to do to soothe yourself and your Spouse when one of you is upset (especially sad or angry). Ask "*What kinds of things do you do to help calm your Spouse when your Spouse is upset?*" Discuss examples. Note that sometimes you can be a calming influence for your Spouse just by being there and listening. Other examples include massage, serving a special food, hugging. Simply telling someone to calm down usually has the opposite effect - Note that only you and your Spouse know what works – and sometimes you can also ask what the other person would like you to do. Discuss the need to be calm yourself before you can be effective in being a calming influence for someone else.
6. Hunt the Good Stuff - finding the little things that can bring you joy. This may involve looking for the positives in interactions with your Spouse and in things they have done. Practicing this skill daily can lead to greater optimism, build on Fondness and Admiration, and strengthen the relationship.
7. Do the little things – the small everyday behaviors that remind the person you care (bringing them a cup of coffee, cutting out a funny cartoon from the paper). These kinds of actions can help build up your Positivity Ratio.
8. Ask, "*Which is your relationship strength? Do you have a relationship strength that isn't on this list?*" Discuss.

Record your own notes here:



Record your own notes here:

- How have you and your Family grown from the deployment?
- How do you show you appreciate each other?
- Other ways?

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Key Points:

1. Many of the strengths we just spoke about help Families develop their Sound Marital House which sets them up to grow from the deployment experience. Tough situations such as the recent deployment can provide the opportunity for both personal and Family growth.
2. Ask, *"How have you and your Family grown from the deployment? How has your perspective changed for the better as a result of the deployment?"* Discuss how Couples may have more respect for each other, that they may find more meaning in building a Family, etc. They may also appreciate each other more.
3. Ask, *"How do you show you appreciate each other?"* Discuss options for showing gratitude, including saying the words "thank you", doing little things that show their gratitude (like in the Positivity Ratio), etc.
4. Ask, *"Are there other ways you have grown as a person and as a Couple from this deployment?"* Discuss various domains from post-deployment growth including Personal Strength (for example, *"I'm a stronger person than I thought I was"*), Enhanced Relationships with others (such as *"I value my Family more"*), Spiritual Change (such as *"What I do is meaningful"*), Appreciation of Life (such as *"I appreciate what I have in life"*), and New Opportunities (such as *"I have started volunteering"*).

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: Reference: Tedeschi, R. G., & McNally, R. J. (2011). Can we facilitate posttraumatic growth in combat veterans? *American Psychologist*, 66, 19-24.



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Record your own notes here:

**Key Points:**

1. Ask if they have any questions and encourage them to either ask the question in the group or afterwards. Ensure you have time set aside after the training to be available.
2. Be sure to thank the participants. For example, *“Thank you for your time today and thank you for your service as an Army Family. We hope this training has started you thinking about ways for your Family to become even more resilient than you already are.”*

A Lesson Plan (LP), [081-RTO02007 Post-Deployment Resilience Training for Spouses/Couples](#) is being developed for this Resilience Training presentation.

The “Key Points” outline included with the PowerPoint presentation should be considered guidelines; make this training your own and address the key points in the most effective way that is applicable to the participants receiving the training.